

The image displays two side-by-side screenshots of the weather.com website on a mobile browser. The left screenshot shows the weather for Srinagar, India, and the right screenshot shows the weather for Sarajevo, Bosnia. Both pages include an Allstate advertisement and a temperature converter.

**Srinagar Weather (Left Screenshot):**

Current Conditions  
Srinagar

Allstate. Your car, your home, your choice.

**70°F** Feels Like: N/A

UV Index: 2 Minimal  
Wind: From the Southeast at 9 mph  
Dew Point: 48°F  
Humidity: 46 %  
Visibility: 2.49 miles  
Barometer: 30.09 inches and steady

10 Day Forecast  
Srinagar  
Last Updated Sunday, February 17, 2002, at 10:40 AM Indian Time (Sunday, 12:40 AM EST)

	Hi (°F)	Lo (°F)
Feb 17	51°	33°
	UV Index: 4 Low	
	48°	34°

**Sarajevo Weather (Right Screenshot):**

Current Conditions  
Sarajevo

Allstate. Your car, your home, your choice.

**34°F** Feels Like: 34°F

UV Index: 0 Minimal  
Wind: calm  
Dew Point: 34°F  
Humidity: 100 %  
Visibility: 0.12 miles  
Barometer: 30.36 inches and steady

10 Day Forecast  
Sarajevo  
Last Updated Sunday, February 17, 2002, at 8:40 AM Central European Time (Sunday, 12:40 AM EST)

	Hi (°F)	Lo (°F)
Feb 17	51°	34°
	UV Index: 2 Minimal	
	51°	37°

# Imagining Srinagar-Sarajevo

ABIR BAZAZ

The City is the memory of massacres. I hope words grow out of Gowkadal, Hawal, Burzalla, Zakura – cancerous, as Genet's love of the Palestinians...

Srinagar is a city in mourning. Who remembers Srinagar in winter? *The winter sky is a Hiroshima sky.* The city is the martyrs' graveyard at Eidgah. The life of Srinagar is mourning. *To recover that memory, or to forget?* The brightness of the sky in Srinagar is cruel. The midnight soldiers demand forgetting... They promised us flags of Fatah, they tantalised us with Jerusalem? But where did the Palestinians go?

I am a Kashmiri Palestinian; Srinagar Sarajevan. I no longer live in Srinagar but I see Srinagar as the absolute present of freedom. Of Srinagar's singularities I can never forget the terrible Beauty of the Srinagar Intifada. Srinagar's Rivers of stones. *Why talk about this revolution? It too resembles a long drawn out burial, with me following the funeral procession from afar.*

Naipaul writes of Srinagar that it sleeps through winter... in the winter of 1990, Srinagar is Berlin-Budapest-Bucharest, Srinagar is Sarajevo. Naipaul's medieval city explodes the night of January 20<sup>th</sup> 1990... on the stroke of midnight. My mother and grandmother are indifferent; they go back to sleep. I put on my *phiran*. I cross over to my neighbour's; the women prepare *kehava* for the men while they are getting dressed. The women prepared *kehava* for the Sarajevans before they disappeared in the Hills. My neighbour is ecstatic.

"I take no chances. I am ready. The UN is coming. Tomorrow is Independence Day".

They call the Faithful to the mosques... *Khoon-e-Shahida Rang Laya/Fatah Ka Parcham Lahraya/Masjid-e-Aqsa Roti Hain/Kyon Yeh Tabahi Hoti Hain...* the loudspeakers speak to the Muslims. They killed more than a hundred demonstrators that night, the night of the Gowkadal massacre. The night of January 20<sup>th</sup> – the night of massacres.

"Srinagar, my friend, is the most dangerous city in the world", said the JKLF sympathiser. "Here the oppressor and the oppressed are too close to destroy". The intimacy nurtures Srinagar's first suicide bomber for 9 years. Afaq, the Jaish suicide bomber who blows himself up outside the Army Cantonment (the ancient Srinagar of King Pravarsena) is just 5 years old in 1990.

January 1990 to March 1990 Srinagar is Prague. The city of demonstrations. They march to the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan. There is a demonstration of Srinagar Chambers of Commerce, of students, of auto drivers, of Policemen... the incessant demonstrations last the winter. The March demonstration brings

SRINAGAR-SARAJEVO

more than 1 million Kashmiris to Srinagar. People offer food to the demonstrators on the roads to Srinagar. Kashmiris turned *azaadi* demonstrations into an *Urs* fair. The soldiers open fire on the demonstrators... kill 10,20,50 Kashmiris... as many as it takes to clear the streets... the downtown bylanes – the hecatombs of the slaughtered. The city is Curfewed for 17 days. There is no relaxation in the Curfew for 17 days in Downtown Srinagar, the nerve centre of the Kashmiri revolt. The Army is out in Kashmir, the schools and hospitals turn into barracks and bazaars into battlefields.

Everybody blames the government. I blame myself. I cross many military checkpoints on the way to school after the curfew days, fearless, in identification with the men behind the sandbags. You carry your identification on you. India's national emblem emblazoned on the ID card. Ashoka's Lions – the symbol of India's commitment to peace, the sole guarantee of your existence. There's also the vague assurance: Truth alone shall prevail. My grandmother blames Sheikh Abdullah for this permanent Revolution, the *Inqilab* (*Inqilab* in Kashmiri is destruction). My mother is overanxious, all Srinagar mothers are overanxious: *Hum Hindustan ka khat-e-hain*. Always. I listen to Radio Azad Kashmir. I fight with my mother. I change. Spring is the season of blood. The JKLF militants hide in sewers or shrines before the city opens its doors. Buddhist monks fleeing persecution had sought sanctuary in Srinagar. Now the JKLF marches to Char-e-Sharief. They vow liberation. They fail. No one, nothing can put into words the six months, and especially the first weeks, in Srinagar in 1990.

Things get worse. The Pandits leave Kashmir. Srinagar lays siege to Jammu and Delhi as refugees. I am no longer in Green Vale, my school. The Green Vale School is miniature Srinagar; the experimental school humbled by its rival – the Muslim Educational Trust. Green Vale is Albinioni's *adagio*, the Romeo-Juliet Bridge in Sarajevo. We study the *Ramayana* in class. We speak of Yusuf's Beauty and Yaqub's Patience. *Inallaha ma'al Sabireen*. Allah is with the Patient. I remember my Srinagar... Tushar loves Muslim mythology (Friday sermons to bribe Tushar), Deepu roots for Pakistan in the India-Pakistan hockey matches, Vivek's father lends me the book on Dialectical Materialism and I lose my religion to Vishal's 25-paisa Hindu roti, my Kashmiri Shaivism... the city of absences. *I'm everything you lost. You won't forgive me.*

"Send him to Bombay with us. We can take care of him. He is quite talented. *Yeh yahan is mahool mein kya karega*", The Principal tells my mother. I change my school. My new school is New Era, New Era Public School. We dodge grenades for years to meet friends at Hideout Café where I exchange Poetry for coffee and the *azaadi* I carry with myself is the moment when I kicked the barricade outside a military bunker.

There is no news of us in the world. People tune to BBC Urdu every evening at 8:30 & 11:00... we become the children of news. *Yeh BBC London hain*... we lower the volume so as not to attract any attention and huddle over the radio as if it'd tell our truth to us. There is no electricity in Sarajevo, no electricity in Srinagar. Srinagar is deserted in winter. Blackouts. BBC London. No electricity for days. Before dying my grandmother looked out the window at the sky and said, "Now I want to be free".

You can choose your target in Srinagar-Sarajevo... kill the son and then shoot the mother in the stomach so that she can watch him die before her own death. They keep

firing... to even kill two people you end up firing for minutes. It isn't easy to kill people. People hear shouts from interrogation centres. Landmines tore bodies to bits and pieces, severed the limbs and peeled off faces as if they were masks. Five thousand years of Srinagar is ruins, the shatter of shrapnel. The ruins of Beirut. The ruins of the spirit. The spirit is Sabra, the spirit is Shattila.

The relatives of nearly 2,000 people who disappeared are still tracing their loved ones. "Please tell us whether they are dead or alive". They destroyed the memorial that the children of the disappeared had built for their missing fathers. They write slogans with the barrels of their guns, the seven-year-old boy's splattered brains their ink. The Sikh soldier confesses in the Crackdown... he pulls out this diary to read out names of localities where if attacked they must fire indiscriminately. To kill. "Here on the Airport Road we must be careful".

In spring as the almond trees bloom, the war tourists come to Srinagar. Journalists from Delhi. They occupy the Ahdoo's Hotel on river Jhelum... in the restaurant at Ahdoo's the air is thick with xenophobia that the journalists carry with them from Delhi. *Loss and suffering, just like the global debt, are negotiable and for sale.* Welcome to Sarajevo.

The ubiquitous TATA bus transports dreams to Lal Chowk. *Apoor, apoor* (across, across the Jehlum) to Lal Chowk. Srinagar-Sarajevo is the city of Border Crossings. Crossing over is quite common. The bus crosses Miljacka-Jhelum to *apoor apoor* Lal Chowk. Cross over to Srinagar-Sarajevo. The Land of Forgetting... Paradise on Earth. And then the boys of the border crossings also get killed... 73 on 5 May 1991... People in Srinagar mourn them in colourful wedding tents.

This then is the Imaginary of my Srinagar... the houses abandoned by Kashmiri Pandits, Pir-e-Rishiyan Nund Rishi, Lalla Ded, Nagarjuna, Abhinavagupta, Left melancholy, the fetishism of Kashmiri nationalists, the hyacinth roofs, *fin-de-siècle* bricks, the Jewish faces (I too am a bit of a Jew), the Aryan noses, Lal Chowk and other squares, Hideout and other Cafés and saints' shrines. The Space in my city is *a ribbon of bullets*.

Hind Bookshop no longer exists and there are no books in Kashmir Bookshop. Lal Chowk is set ablaze. Palladium cinema is destroyed. Only the facade of the foyer is left... the broken wall frames the singed Srinagar sky as the screen of the Palladium's past... countless Hindi films fade to flames. I see Dr. Guru's dead body. There is a hole under his neck... tears flow... this must be madness. My friend, how can I share your grief? They shot Dr Guru in cold blood outside his hospital. We move out with the funeral, they shoot at the funeral procession... I lie buried under people bicycles people... *La Illaha Illallah Muhammad Rasul Allah...* this is Death. I run. *They killed everybody, they killed everybody...* and they killed just one man... *I follow him through blood on the road and hundreds of pairs of shoes the mourners left behind, as they ran from the funeral, victims of the firing...* "Who remembers who killed whom?"... I turn to psychoanalysis and Buddhism.

Maybe in the words of Fawaz Turki, I am too young to be Kashmiri. I am running away. How long do I run?